

Domestic Tourism Focus as Tourism Leaders Meet in Maldives

Male, The Maldives, 7 October 2021 - *The annual UNWTO Executive Training Programme returned to focus on harnessing the power of domestic tourism to drive recovery and growth in destinations across Asia and the Pacific.*

Now in its 15th year, the Training Programme once again served as the leading platform for the region's tourism leaders to network and develop strategies for guiding the sector forward. The event brought together **representatives of 25 countries**, with six (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Sri Lanka, Mongolia and Nepal) joining hosts the Maldives to attend the training sessions in person.

High-level political welcome

The Minister of Tourism of the Maldives, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, officially opened the Training Session, welcoming delegates taking part in person and online. Further highlighting the host country's high-level political support for tourism, the UNWTO leadership also met with the Minister and his colleagues to learn more of plans to diversify its sector and make it more gender equal.

Dr Mausoom thanked UNWTO for the opportunity to host the training sessions, highlighting the Maldives' commitment to growing tourism back sustainably, with a focus on promoting the islands' rich culture, heritage and biodiversity. Opening the event, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili stressed that, as tourism restarts in many parts of the world, "the sector needs leaders who can recognize ideas that will make a difference, who will innovate and back entrepreneurs and start-ups".

Innovation and private sector partnerships

Reflecting the restart of domestic tourism ahead of international tourism, both across Asia and the Pacific and globally, the Executive Training Programme focused on enabling destinations of all sizes to capitalize on this trend. The opening sessions focused on destination management and was led by UNWTO experts alongside key partners including Google, and featured case studies from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, Iran, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. This was followed by sessions focusing on the role of innovation and private sector partnerships in growing domestic tourism, with case studies presented by representatives of Bhutan, Macao, China, Maldives, Myanmar, Philippines, Samoa, India and China.

Building on UNWTO Support for the Maldives

Since the Maldives re-opened its borders to international tourism in July 2020, arrivals have been steadily increasing. In February 2021, UNWTO signed an agreement with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for the implementation of a project on tourism recovery for the Maldives, working closely with the government and private sector stakeholders to accelerate the safe and sustainable restart of the sector.

The 34th Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia (34th CAP-CSA) will also be hosted by the Maldives next year. It will be held within the framework of Maldives' celebration of its Golden Jubilee to commemorate the 50th anniversary of its tourism development and its globally recognized status as a world-class tourism destination.

Related Links:

[UNWTO Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific](#)

[UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, October 2021](#)